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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003956

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TAGS: [PGOV TW](#)

SUBJECT: PAN-GREEN SURPRISE DEFEAT: TECHNICAL FACTORS KEY?

REF: A. TAIPEI 03898

[1B](#). TAIPEI 03940

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan, Reason 1.4 (B/D)

[11](#). (C) Summary: An overly aggressive nomination strategy combined with a lower than expected voter turnout to deal the Pan-Green camp a surprising defeat in the December 11 Legislative Yuan (LY) election. Although the Pan-Green alliance of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) made some small gains over its 2001 LY performance, the Pan-Green fell 12 seats short of winning a controlling majority in the LY and performed well below its own expectations and most analysts' estimates (Reftels). Throughout the election, national-level issues, such as constitutional revision and name rectification, dominated the media but remained secondary to the electorate's focus on local-level personality and party machine-driven politics. End Summary.

The Pan-Green's Achilles Heel: Aggressive Nominations

[12](#). (C) Riding high after its presidential election victory earlier this year, the Pan-Green camp implemented an aggressive nomination strategy in the hope of translating earlier support for President Chen Shui-bian into a majority of seats in the LY. The DPP increased its nominations from 83 in 2001 to 92 this year, many of the jumps coming in traditional Pan-Blue strongholds in northern and central Taiwan where the DPP thought it had cultivated enough votes to pick up more seats. The DPP, moreover, appears to have continued to support all its candidates in the final two weeks without resorting to the tactic of "dropping stragglers to protect the rest" (ch'i-pao) as it had done in previous elections. The TSU's nomination of 30 candidates, although a drop from 40 in 2001, proved too optimistic and damaged the Pan-Green as a whole. TSU candidates soaked up enough Green votes to deprive the DPP of an additional 6-7 seats. The TSU candidates were largely unknowns, both locally and nationally. As a result, few were strong enough to win. They could only siphon off votes that might have won enough DPP seats for Chen to reach his announced goal.

[13](#). (C) The overly-aggressive nomination strategy and decision not to drop stragglers greatly complicated Pan-Green efforts to allocate votes (pei-piao) evenly among its candidates within a given district. Taoyuan County, where the DPP had sufficient votes to gain six seats but won only four, is illustrative of Pan-Green's poor performance in areas of potential gain. The DPP nominated seven candidates -- one more than in 2001 -- but because the vote allocation to the lower three candidates was spread so evenly (around 30,000 votes) a rival TSU candidate and a Pan-Blue People First Party (PFP) member beat out all three by 1,400 and 3,400 votes, respectively.

[14](#). (C) Other areas, such as Taipei County, experienced what some observers are calling the "Shen Fa-hui" phenomenon. DPP members who had been watching Shen trail badly in public opinion polls took it upon themselves to "allocate" their votes to Shen, who ended up the highest DPP vote-getter in the district. According to several post-election polls, although DPP supporters were more likely to allocate votes than Pan-Blue members, many DPP supporters ignored party guidelines on vote allocation and made their own decisions on how to cast their votes.

Centrist Voters Stayed Home

[14](#). (C) The low voter turnout, 59.16 percent compared to over 80 percent in the presidential election, also worked against the Pan-Green, as many of the large block of centrist voters who made President Chen's victory in March opted to sit out this election. The DPP had projecting in its internal polling a turnout of 62-64 percent. The missing 3-5 percent, had they chosen to show, could have tilted the election in the Pan-Green's favor. According to one poll, 25 percent of the people who chose not to vote were Pan-Green supporters versus 19 percent for Pan-Blue. Regardless of party affiliation, however, the absence of centrist voters was felt hardest by "moderates" in both camps. Hsu Chung-hsiung, a

"lite Blue" legislator, pointed out that extreme pro-unification and pro-independence candidates came away with high vote tallies while moderates like himself and Bi-khim Hsiao had much lower vote totals than polls projected because centrist voters, their main base of support, did not vote in large numbers.

KMT Grassroots Machinery: Keeps on Tickin'

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15. (C) In contrast to the Pan-Green, the Pan-Blue retention of its majority defied analysts' predictions and suggests that the Kuomintang (KMT) extensive grassroots operations may not be as worn down as even KMT party insiders thought. KMT Director for Overseas Affairs Ho Szu-yin told AIT the night of the election that his party had conducted a focused effort to identify and tap into a reserve of "contingency voters" that they directed in the last two days of the campaign to boost struggling candidates. The Pan-Blue conservative approach in nominating its candidates, moreover, allowed the Pan-Blue to concentrate its resources and, in the end, support for most ex-KMT "maverick" candidates shifted back to the party candidates. As a result, the KMT was able to pick up 11 seats and preserve the Pan-Blue majority despite the PFP's loss of 12 seats.

Comment: A Referendum on Taiwan Independence?

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16. (C) In the post-election climate some Taiwan and foreign media, as well as local politicians, have touted the election results as a clear referendum against a radical Taiwan independence agenda. However, it is difficult to tell whether election fatigue or a reaction to constitutional reform and "love Taiwan" rhetoric, which worked exceedingly well for President Chen earlier in the year, were responsible for the final outcome. Pan-Blue leaders and moderates within the DPP are pointing to the "radical" pro-independence rhetoric in a bid to move Chen and the DPP back to a more centrist position (Septel). Despite the rhetorical fury unleashed by President Chen and former President Lee Tung-hui in the final weeks of the election, most grassroots leaders that AIT consulted continue to say that national issues played only a small role in LY election politics. Although the DPP defeat may weaken its ability to push the sometimes inflammatory and divisive agenda Chen proclaimed during the campaign, the reason for the defeat may lie more in the DPP's tactical and mechanical mistakes.

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